

Why won't they just leave?

This is probably the most common question asked about domestic violence. **The answer is complicated.**

In many cases, the abuse starts with little things and only happens occasionally. Things might get better for a while. The abuser may ask for forgiveness and promise to do better. This gives the victim hope that things will work out. And sometimes they do. We don't hear much about those cases.

But sometimes things keep going wrong. Often, abusers convince their victims that they are worthless. They might start to control their victims' activities or money, including any the victim makes. The abuser may ruin the victim's credit rating. Gradually, the abuser makes the victim increasingly dependent on the abuser. It becomes increasingly difficult for the victim to even imagine leaving. No place to live? No money? No transportation? What about the kids?

The victim may have no one to turn to. The abuser may have isolated his victim from family and friends. They might not believe her. The abuser may have convinced them that it's the victim who is the problem.

Abusers may threaten to track down the victim and do even more harm. They might threaten to take away the kids or even hurt them. If there is a pet, the abuser may threaten to harm it.

If the victim is an immigrant, their ability to stay in Canada may be tied to their marriage. If it breaks up, then what?

The stakes for victims are often very high. The time of greatest risk of harm is when the victim threatens to leave or actually does leave.

If you think anyone is in danger call the police: 911

If you think children may be at risk, you MUST report it to Child and Family Services: 1-800-638-0715

Frequently asked questions

Why would a victim be so worried about what will happen to a pet?

Many victims of domestic violence or their children are very attached to a pet. The pet has likely provided them with a lot of emotional support and comfort. Abusers often target those pets as a way of controlling their victims. The *Alberta SPCA Pet Safekeeping Program* offers temporary care for the pets of domestic violence victims who need to escape their abusive situations and have no other place for their pets.

Handy resources

Alberta Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Alberta SPCA)

Pet Safekeeping – website